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A GRANDFATHER IN THE GOLD RUSH

ISAAC ANNIS WRITES HOME
FROM AUBURN DRY DIGGINS

EDITED BY
JOHN E. PARSONS

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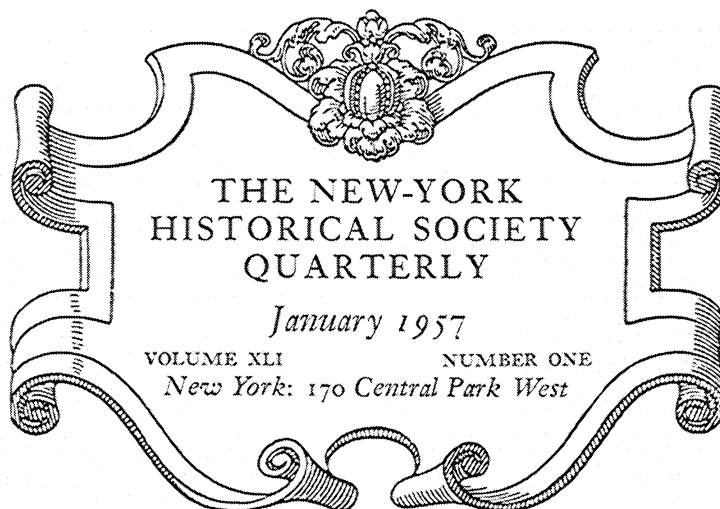
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"By Charles Drayton Gibbes from his own and other recent surveys, 1852"

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A GRANDFATHER IN THE GOLD RUSH

ISAAC ANNIS WRITES HOME FROM AUBURN DRY DIGGINGS¹

Edited by JOHN E. PARSONS

WHEN Isaac Annis of Ontario County, New York, joined the gold rush to California, he was sixty-three years of age. From a family which had settled in New Hampshire before the Revolution,² he grew up in New York State and in 1848 followed the trade of blacksmith at Port Gibson on the Erie Canal.³ There he lived with his married daughter Nancy, whose husband, Leander Russell, kept store and loaded canal boats. Though several times a grandfather, Annis was one of the first

¹ Thirteen letters written to or by Isaac Annis from 1849 to 1851 have recently been acquired by the Society. The first one bears the endorsement in his daughter's hand: "My Father's California Letters." These letters were transcribed for the editor by Miss Charlotte P. Rowell.

² John McNab Currier, *Genealogy of David Annis of Hopkinton and Bath, New Hampshire, his Ancestors and Descendants* (Newport, Vt.: 1909), p. 36.

³ This small village was named for Henry B. Gibson of Canandaigua, who had been active in the construction of the Erie Canal. George S. Conover (ed.), *History of Ontario County, N. Y.* (Syracuse: 1893), p. 348.

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in his village made restless by news of the discovery of gold at Sutter's mill.⁴

In company with five younger men from Port Gibson, he went to New York City in January, 1849, to take passage on the ship *Robert Bowne* for California. This old packet, built in 1832 at Stonington, Connecticut,⁵ had been purchased by the Albany Chemical Mining Association to make the Cape Horn voyage under the command of Captain F. G. Cameron. As early as December 14, 1848, notices appeared in the New York papers⁶ offering shares in the vessel and cargo. Advertised as a "newly coppered live oak ship" with "main deck converted into a splendid saloon," the *Bowne* would be equipped with two sets of sails, provisioned for two years, and carry a physician to attend the passengers. A cabin ticket with a share in the ship and stores was offered at \$250, or passage only at \$150. The announcement likewise appeared in the *Albany Argus*⁷ where the Port Gibson Argonauts and other upstaters undoubtedly saw it.

Not until the end of January did there develop much demand for passage around the Horn, the Panama route being at first strongly favored. Departure of the *Bowne* was postponed three times while the advertisements of her promoters continued. She finally sailed February 6th with 168 passengers, two of them wives and four boys accompanying their fathers. The list of voyagers⁸ included three doctors and noted that R. C. Drake of Brooklyn had brought along "his celebrated dog Sam." Over a third of the ship's company came from New York City, with twenty-two from Albany, eight from Niagara Falls, and a scattering from upstate counties, Connecticut and New Jersey.

From Port Gibson besides Isaac Annis the *Bowne* carried

⁴ President James K. Polk officially confirmed the discovery of gold in a message to Congress December 5, 1848.

⁵ Carl C. Cutler, *Greyhounds of the Sea, The Story of the American Clipper Ship* (New York: 1930), p. 410, gives the tonnage of the *Bowne* as 505 and measurements 123 x 30.3 ft.

⁶ *New York Herald*, December 14, 1848, to February 4, 1849.


⁷ *Albany Argus*, January 4, 1849.

⁸ *New York Sun*, February 8, *New York Tribune*, February 9, 1849. Annis's name is misspelled in both papers.

FOR CALIFORNIA.

THE BEST CHANCE!

FOR SAN FRANCISCO,
California and the Gold Regions.

 THE SPLENDID, fast-sailing newly coppered live oak packet ship

ROBERT BOWNE,

Having been detained on account of not being able to get all the bread she requires (500 barrels) will positively sail on or before the first of February.

Her main deck has been fitted up with a saloon and state-rooms in the style of the North River, steamboats—she has a spacious cabin on deck, and is one of the most comfortable ships up for California. She takes two sets of sails, extra spars, 800 barrels of water, and has been put in complete condition for a voyage around Cape Horn. She is commanded by

CAPTAIN F. G. CAMERON,

one of the most experienced Captains out of this port.—Capt. Cameron was first in command of the United States frigate Macedonian, under Com. De Kay, on her late mission of mercy to Ireland. Capt. Baily, who has lately returned from the Pacific, goes out as her first officer. She takes out an able and experienced physician and surgeon.

The following stores are now being put on board.

300 bbls of Flour	50	bbls of Rice	30	bags of Coffee
400 .. Beef	50	.. Beans	50	quintals Codfish
300 .. Pork	20	.. Sugar	20	kegs of Butter
500 .. Bread	10	.. Mackerel	10	boxes of Soap
100 .. Potatoes	10	.. Onions	10	hhd's Molasses
50 .. Meal	5	.. Vinegar	5	cheats of Tea.

This amount of stores will be sufficient for the passengers 18 months after their arrival out. Each man's portion will be worth more to him on his arrival than the amount he has to pay for his share and passage. We invite all that desire to seek their fortunes in the Gold Region of California to call and inspect the accommodations of this ship previous to engaging elsewhere, as so rare an opportunity seldom offers to go in so safe and so substantially a built vessel.

The ship and cargo will belong to the passengers, and each passenger will be entitled to four barrels of freight, besides his baggage. The ship will remain in port for a home and storehouse for the passengers, who can return in her free of charge, and sell his share of the ship upon her arrival or at San Francisco. She will go out in ballast trim, and is expected to make the passage in 4½ months, and unless the passengers desire will not stop on the voyage.

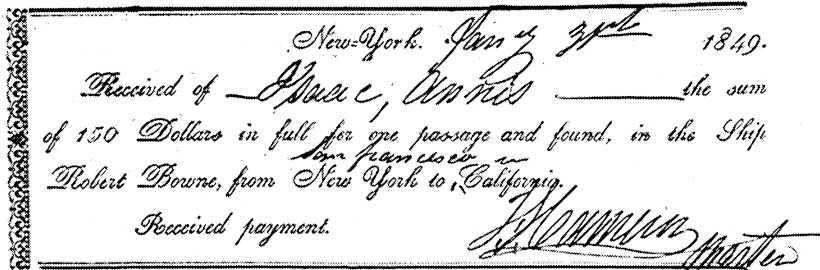
Price of passage and share of ship, cargo and provisions, \$250 only. A few berths remain untaken. Those wishing to avail themselves of this opportunity should apply at once. A few first cabin passengers will be taken at \$150 each, without share of vessel or cargo. No steerage or second cabin passengers go in this ship.

Apply to the Captain, on board, Pier 29 East River, at the foot of Roosevelt-st. j29 41s*

ADVERTISEMENT OF THE PACKET SHIP "ROBERT BOWNE"

New York Tribune, January 31, 1849, p. 3, col. 7

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ISAAC ANNIS'S RECEIPT FOR PASSAGE AROUND THE HORN, 1849

The New-York Historical Society

G. E. Briggs, Daniel Earle, John R. Halliday, Jacob Saulpaugh and John Stacy. Another neighbor, Henry Corser, sailed later on the steamer *Hartford*. Annis wrote a farewell letter to his daughter Nancy from "New York Cittey" January 28th:

We shall sail next Thursday in the ship Robbart Downe [Robert Bowne] for California by way of the Horn. The sterner Cresnet Cittey has just returned from Charges and sais there is so many people wating there now that it will be 2 month before tha [they] can git a pasag.⁹ Our Capt name is Camron and is just as old a man as I be. We pay him \$150 dollars for pasag and bord and we carry 4 baril fruit. We carry provision to last 4 month. With us we bought a boat and gave \$60 dollars for it and we bought a tent for \$24 dollars and we are goin to carray a sett of black smith tools and other youtenesel tu numers to menchen. I wish you could see the rush that there is here. There was 3 ships went out yesterday for California and to see the people on the dock men and women in soled mass all for California. Nothing here but California. Our ship is 10 hundred tuns burden and carres out 2 hundred passengers all Amaracans.

His next letter home arrived sooner perhaps than was expected:

I am now in Rio de Janeiro in South Amaraca April 8, 1849 and I must tell you that it is the hansomist place that I ever saw.¹⁰ It is hemed in by mountin of rocks on all sides, verey high peakes, sum of them is 12 hundred feet high covered with grass and shrubbery and orchard of orang and lemons and benanners and all kind of tropical fruit. Today is Sunday.

⁹ *New York Herald*, January 28, 1849, reported arrival of the *Crescent City* with the headline: "Hosts of Yankees Stuck at Chagres."

¹⁰ Rio de Janeiro was a usual first stop for round-the-Horn ships. Oscar Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields* (New York: 1949), p. 79; Raymond A. Rydell, *Cape Horn to the Pacific* (Berkeley: 1952), p. 121.

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We are anchored of[f] 3 miles from shore and I shall go on shore tomorrow. I want to by sum article that I did not get in N. York. You can by one thousand oring for 1. dollar here. . . . My health is good, better then it has bin for one year past. I hant bin unwell but 2 days sins we left N. York. Wee bin out about 3 weekes I head [had] two fites of the agu and that is all. Wee have bin 59 days from N. York and only got 7 thousand miles but wee have saled all of twelve thousand. Wee have had calm and contra winds more than half of the way. We have cros[s]ed the Atlantick Ocen twise. Wee head to go East within 2 days sail of England, then steered South to South Amarica.

We left N. York February 6 on Tuesday and Wensday we got into the Streem Gulf and we cros[s]ed the Gulf in 24 hours and the gail com on in the Gulf and continued for 7 day so that we got nothing to eat all that time except some see crackers and that head to eat by holding on by ropes. It carred away the foremast sails, slit them all into strings. The bow of the ship when she ris out of the see she would go up into air 60 feet. She would rowl so that her yard armes would strike the water. But that is all the ruff weather we have head now I must tell you a little more about see sickness. It did not effect me at all but J. Haladay and Stacey and Briggs three sicker people you never see. Briggs got over his when the gail was over but Haladay was sick all of one month and Stacey about 3 weekes.

Munday. I have bin on shore and bin up on the mountin and picked orings from the trees 4 hundred feet from the cittey and it is the buttifull site that I ever saw in my life. The banannar tree is the hansomis tree that ever grew. . . . The people are a degraded sett of people. Som white and mostley black all mingle together. I cant understand one word that tha say; tha dont [k]now anything about our money and it hard to trade with them. Wee shall sail tomorrow to go round the Horn. It is 33 degrees from here South. Rio lais in 22 ½ degrees South from the Equator. The clamit is good and if I was yong I should not go back to North Amarica again but I am going on to Calafornia and I think that I shant git back to Port Gibson under two years.

In a letter dated August 31, 1849, Annis announced his safe arrival in California:

Thank God I am here in San Francisco after six months and 22 days from N. York.²² We arrived in the harbor the 27 day of August 6 oclock

²² *Weekly Alta California*, August 31, 1849, reported arrival at San Francisco August 29 of "Am sp Robert Bowne, Cameron, 203 dys frm N. York, cargo to order, 163 psgrs." About the same date there arrived from New York the ship *George Washington*, 202 days out, and the clipper *Memnon*, 123 days net. The last was the fastest Cape Horn run from New York that year. Cutler, *supra*, note 5, p. 144.

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and today I am on shore in the tent riting on a barrel and sitting on a velese. . . . I must tell you about my health. It was never better than it is now. I hant been sick at all. I am 20 lb. heavier than when I started from home.

We struck our course South for the Horn and nothing happened untill wee got in Lt. 44 of [f] against the LaPlate River and then came on a gail and lasted 8 days and I will let you know how wee put the ship in plight. Wee furell all the sales up to the spares snug and the passengers go down in the cabin. The main hatch is nailed down and the tiller is roped tight, no man to the wheel and let the ship go and she drift. She drifted 6 hundred miles and when it was over wee spread sales and git on our track and we were all the month of May. The last of May we git to 58 degrees Lt. The Horn lais in 56 Lt. and I can tell you that wee head a cold time of it. Sum of us frosed our twoes, me for one so tha skined. The last day of May wee stud calm and we stud but one chance out of 4 [not] to be blowed back but providence favored us and wind struck us on our stern. We went on and when wee got down to 40 degrees there come on another gail that lasted 11 days. The 10 day of June was a hard day. Wee could see the waves coming up through the rigging but the old ship mounted them and being short of water we put in to Calio in Peru.²²

I went to the Cittey of Lima 8 miles distant in the stage drove by six horses. One little thing I will mention which will make you laugh. I was the onley white man in the stage and when the stage stoped I got out and thare was a wa[i]ter to wait on me and he went onto me with his brushes like a man brushing a horse, for I must tell you the rodes are verrey dusty for it never rains here. So I paid him one rial that is one shilling. Then he conducted me up 1 pare of staires and thare was another blackey and he went onto my boots, one rial more. Then there was another one stud ready and he showed me the little house and he must have one more rial. So you see that it took 3 rial to git to the little house, that is the custom of the place.

I will talk a little on the feemails here. Tha are collared people but tha are better made than our Amarcán is, verrey small hand and feet. I was interduced to one Spanish ladey that her dress did not [cost] less than 15 hundred dollars, satting silk, and her dimand rings were verrey costley. I was the only man that she wood talk with and that was through interpreter. She was verrey rich; she was from Chile. The rest I will tell you when I come home.

So I went on bored of the ship Saturday night and wee waided anchor 5 oclock Sunday morning under a good breese for this port. 6 thousand miles to make. Wee ran West to 115 degrees Longitude that was halfway and wee run it in 15 dayes and we have bin all the rest of the time gitting

²² Callao, Peru, alternated with Talcahuano or Valparaiso, Chile, as a Pacific stop for the Cape Horn Argonauts. Lewis, *supra*, note 10, pp. 144, 154.

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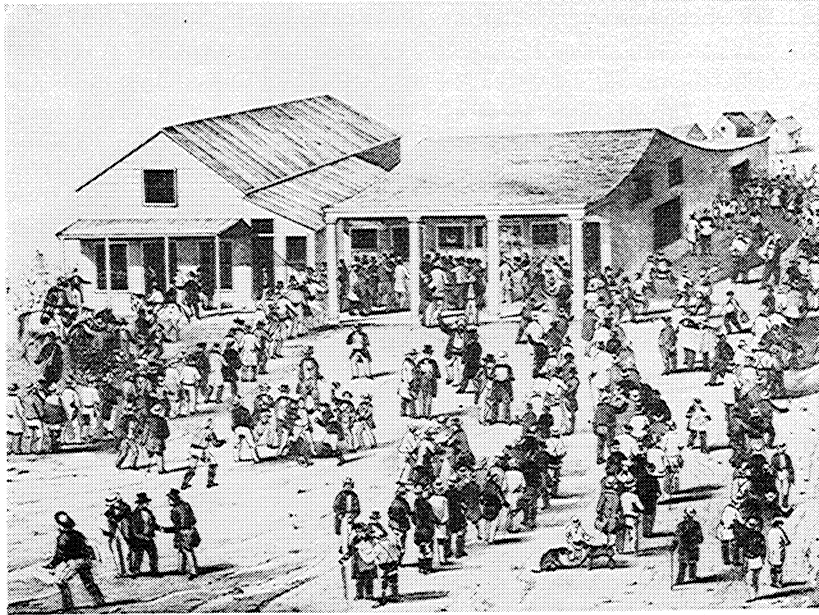
here. Wee head head winds all the way. Wee maid it by beating. So I must tell you about this place. It is boult in the form of an ampither, hills on both sides and a valley runs up between them. But I must tell you that it is a barin sanday place, no wood and no trees.

I seen more money here than in all the places in my life. . . . Thare is a grate maney here that has com back from the digging with thare gold and I was in the exchange office and I see them waighing. There was two men thare to git thare gold change. One head one bunch in a paper and tha waighed it. He had 15 hundred dollars and the other man head more and tha paid them in Mexican dollars. Tha dont carry thare money in purse but tha put it in a bag and sholdred it and head about half bushel. Tha are exchanging all the time. Now I will [tell] you about the gamb[1]ers. I went in to the rooms and the tables are spread with silver and gould by thousand not by hundred. Tha think nothing putting down 1000 dollars at time.

Carpnter git 16 dollars per day, common hand from 5 to 10 dollars per day and things is verry deer here all except clothing is as cheap as in the Cittey of N. York. Beef at the markett 18 cents per lb. a loaf of bread of your loaves is 25 cents and flour is from 6 to 8 dollars per bbl. I cant tell you all but money is plenty here. Tha pay any price that tha ask them. A boy went out and shot 50 snipes and brought them in and sold them for 1 dollar a peace and he made 50 dollars in one day. Now I must tell you that the cittey is so full of goods that tha have no where to put them and the street is full. Piles of them 10,000 dollars lais in piles in the street and I must tell you that the people verrey onest here. No steeling. You may leve trunk and bagig on the shore tha are saft.

The hardest is to come. Wee have got to go up the Sacramento River 150 miles; that wee can go by water by paing for it. Tha ask 16 dollars for 1 pasanger and your freat you must pay for besides. After wee git up thare wee have got to carry on our back or pay 30 cents per lb. That is on mules or horses and wee have got to traveil over high hills and mountin. But tha say that wee can dig from 1 to 6 and 8 ounces per day. It go here 16 dollars per ounce. Wee thought that wee should be too late but it is so hot up there tha cant dig now. Thare is more than 1000 people here waiting for it be colder. Tha say September and October and November is the best months. Now I must tell you butter is worth 75 cents pertatos 1 dollar per lb. Tha sell them by the pound. You can git bordied for 12 dollars per week at the loist houses Hank has not got here yet. I went to the post office the next day of wee got in at 9 oclock in morning and I could not git your letter till 1 in the afternoon. Thare was more than 5 hundred people wa[i]ting for letters. I will tell you that the harbor is full of ships and tha are coming in two or three every day and thare is thousand on the sea.

The letter from his daughter mentioned by Annis was writ-



THE POST OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO, IN GOLD RUSH DAYS

A faithful representation of the crowds daily applying at that office for mail

Drawn by H. F. Cox; litho. by Wm. Endicott & Co., New York, 1849-52

ten June 6th, after receipt of his message from Rio. She reported the local news of Port Gibson, going on to say:

We are all glad you went by the way of Cape Horn as the overland route is sickly. A great many who started to go that way are dead. The cholera, that dreadfull scourge of mankind is raging here in our cities to a fearfull extent. Henry H. Treat of Palmyra died of cholera on board a steamboat on the Rio Grand River in Mexico on his way to California. Gen Worth and Dan Marble have both died of it. Sixty new cases reported this morning in New York, ten deaths. Great fears are entertained here that it will git among the miners in California and sweep them off like rotten sheep. If you should be taken with it take three table spoonsfull of the best French brandy and forty drops of laudanum, mix it well and drink it. Rub your body with brandy and hot flannel cloth, if you are not better in one hour take a tablespoonful of castor oil, one of brandy, ten drops of laudanum. It will throw you into a sound sleep. You will wake well. This is practised in India with success.

There has been a great riot at the Astor Place theatre in New York. It

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was got up between the two great rival actors Deforest and Macready. The mob were determined to drive Macready off the stage and out of the city. The authorities called out thirteen military companies to subdue the mob. The order was given to fire and 27 men were killed. Macready left for Boston in a few hours.²² On the evening of the 17 of May the steamboat Empire left New York for Troy with 250 passengers on board. When opposite Newburgh a schooner loaded with lumber struck her and stove a hole in her and it sank in about ten minutes. It is not ascertained how many lives were lost. They have found 20 bodies. The steamship Rip Van Winkle was a short distance behind. She came up and took off[f] many of the passengers. We have got the little gold dollars here at last. At the mint they were made at the rate of 108 per minute.

The propeller Hartford that Hank Corser went aboard of was wrecked off[f] the Bermuda Island. She was however taken in to port and repaired then went on, Hank among them. He is second mate gets \$100 per month. Sixteen of those passengers came back to N. Y. Here is another cure for cholera. As soon as you have any diharrea take one teaspoonfull of sulphur in molasses. In about 2 hours take another teaspoonfull. It will cure if taken in season even after cramps set in.

Her husband added a postscript about business affairs at home:

Money is very scarce and times hard here. Business on the canal dull, freight low 45 to 50¢ per bbl. being all boatmen can get from Buffalo to Albany per bbl. for flour and other frt. in proportion. Wheat is worth 9/ corn 55¢ oats 27¢ potatoes 4/ per bushel. We done well in the corn we bought on our own a/c but we are buying on commission for Mr. Blackmar. We have taken in over 10,000 bushels and a number 1000 bbls flour. Crops look well here now.

Annis wrote briefly to Nancy October 24, 1849, from Sacramento where he had just returned after a visit to the mines:

As for the gold diggings I shall work no more this season. I am not going to kill myself for gold. I cant make but about 8 dollars per day. It is 45 miles from here and I have come down to git me a sett of tooles and I am going to work at my trade. I have got a team with me. Wee bought a team for we have to pay 16 dollars per hundred to git it carried up It is a verry hard contray, dry, sandy, barran, broken hilly, scrub oak, no timber. Tha rais nothing, no vedgtable at all. If you buy any pertaters

²² Trouble began May 8th when the partisans of Forrest, an American actor, interrupted the performance of Macready, an Englishman. Each was playing Macbeth at a different theater. Two nights later when Macready sought to appear again, the mob stoned the troops that had been called to Astor Place, and were finally fired on. J. T. Headley, *The Great Riots of New York* (New York: 1873), p. 111; Bayard Tuckerman (ed.), *The Diary of Philip Hone* (New York: 1889), Vol. II, p. 359.

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you have to pay 75 dollars a bushel, that is ten shillings per lb. Butter 3 dollars per lb, chease 1 dollar, eggs 12 dollars per duzzon.

If you want to right to me dyrect your letters to San Francisco and wee git them from thare. It cost us 2 dollars but that is nothing here I send my best respect to all the children and Alice. Tell her that the first peace of gold that I dug was a \$3.00 dollar peace and I am going to keep it to make her ring. I forgot to right that wee sa[i]lled clous by Roberson Cruson Island. I must tell you that the clamit is verrey hot. The 11 day of September the thermomater stud at 136 degrees in this citty and verrey warm days and cold night.

His most complete account of conditions in the Mother Lode country bore date of January 16, 1850, from "Upper Californey at the Dry Diggins at the villedg of Auburn" near the North Fork" [American River]:

Now Nancy I shall right to you just as I should talk to you if I was with you. You wanted to have me right to you all about the gold diggins. That would be imposable but I will give you som discription of them. Thay have been verrey much exagrated. The whole tract of the mountanios land is impregnated with gold but it is verrey hard to be got. It requeres a grate deal of hard labor to git it in the dry diggins. Wee can dig and find lumps of gold from one dollar up to five hundred. That is the biggest lump that has bin found sins I have ben here. I did not see that but it is here in the placer. I see one that was worth \$300 dollars but that is slow work for tha are not offten found. Then thare is fine gold in the durt that tha dig out with pick and shovel and wash it in a cradle. It runs threw a sheet iron seive into a straner and then down to the bottom of the cradle and thare the gold stopes. The durt all runs out at the foot of the cradle. Then the gold is taken out and put into a pan and was[h]ed to git out the black sand for the gold will keep to the bottom.

Now I will give you som discription of the weat diggins as tha are called. That is on the river. The river is two miles from here and I will tell you what a place it is to git to. You would think that I could never

²⁴ This camp, first known as Rich Dry Diggings, then North Fork Dry Diggings, was named Auburn in the fall of 1849. Erwin G. Gudde, *California Place Names* (Berkeley: 1949), p. 18. That winter Auburn became a rendezvous for upstate New Yorkers. "Quite a large community gathered there in the fall to pass the winter, among them a number from Otsego County, New York, who had come by sea around Cape Horn and brought quite a large amount of goods, which they sold from their cabins." Myron Angell, *History of Placer County, California* (Oakland: 1882), p. 365. The diary of John A. Markle, who arrived about the same time as Annis, is quoted *ibid.*, p. 77. Samuel W. Holladay, who came to Auburn earlier, left the following April. For his reminiscences see *Publications, Soc. of Calif. Pioneers*, 1941, p. 24. Silas Weston, *Four Months in the Mines of California* (Providence: 1854), pp. 5-17, describes the camp in the spring of 1850.

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git to it. Wee go till we com on bluff of the hill. Then it is almost perpendicular up and down. It is 15 hundred feet down to the water and it takes one half day to go it and hard enough at that and when you git down it is all rocks. In the summer the river is verrey low and that work with the cradle as I have discribed to you. Thay dig away the stone and git the durt and wash it and if you cud find a sand bar and turn the water you find a rich lead. Some has taken out \$200 hundred thousand dollars but others may work and not git one thousand the same leanth of time. It is so hot that a man cant work from 11 o'clock to 4.

The raney season begun the 1 of November and it rains about 2 thirds of the time. Thare hant bin anney snow except about 2 inches that com 14th day of January but it went right of[f]. The river now is verrey high. It is so rapid that it rises in one night 22 feet. J. Stacey and Briggs and Hardin and H. Corser is over the river and cant git back. The water carr[i]ed of[f] the boat and tha have bin thare ten days and wee have heard nothng from them. Hank got here the 10 of November. Left the *Hartford* 18 hundred miles below San Francisco and com in another vessel. He head bin here 3 weekes before he found me and his tent wont over eaighttey rodes from ourn. I must tell you that thare is so manney people here we dont [k]now the neerest naber and wee are all in a heap. The gold diggings is full of miners. You have no idea how manney people thare is here.

I rote you that my health was good and so it was but I did not right to you how sickly it was in Sacramento. Thay ware dieng all around me. . . . Thare is three deses [diseases] that the contory is subject to. All those that com over land git it and a grat maney of them die with it. A most all them that come round the Horn have it that is the black disentary and it is a verrey hard compla[i]nt. I rote on Thursday to you and I stayed in the cittey till Sunday and in the morning I was taken with a verrey hard pain [in] my bowells. The compla[i]nt com on to me and I head just as much as I could due to git home and it run me about 5 weekes. I thought one spell that I should be laid in Calafornia and if I head a died I will tell you how tha barrey them. Tha wrop them up in a blankett and put them in the ground for lumber is so high it would cost \$200 fully for a coffin. But I got over it and my bodley health is good.

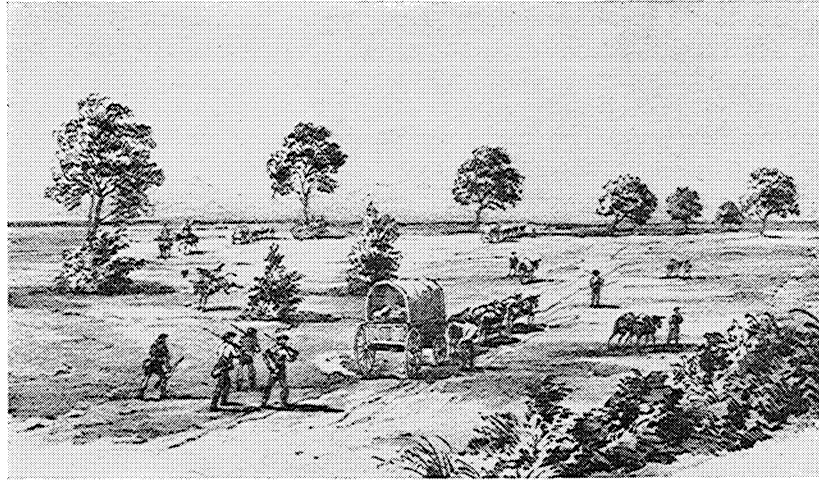
Thare is 2 more compl[a]int. One is scervey that begin in the laig bones and the leag swills up all read as scarlett and sum die with it. That I hant head but the other compla[i]nt is the nee. The nee is verrey painful and so weak that you cant go. I have head that but gitting better. Thare is one man within stone throw has head it ever sins he come here and he cant go. He lies in bunk all the time. His laiges is drawn up so that he cant straten them. He com over in the same ship with me. When we come here thare was not one bu[i]lding here and now thare is something like 30 or 40 la[r]ge bu[i]lding covred with shakes. No lumber only what is brought from Sacramento Cittey and it is worth \$1.00 per foot.

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You rote to me that you wanted to [k]now how I lived and how I fared. I fared verry hard on the ship but I lived threw it as well as anney of them. . . . We all mooved up to the dry diggins and the boys did not like Salt-pough and tha bought him out. Tha wanted to go to the river to work and I concluded that I wo[u]ld not go this winter and wee divid the provition and I stay here and work at my trade. Wee head not but a small stock of provition. Wee head 2 barril of bread 1 baril of sugar and 1 bag of coffey 1 bag of rice. So I went down to the cittey and bought me a sett of black-smith tools and I bought som ne[ce]ssary for myself for you [k]now that I like sumthing that is good to eat. I bough me half barril of cleer pork paid 25 dollars. Half bushel of beans 1 ham 2lb of butter paid 3 dollars. 2 lb of pertators 1 dollar. Tin pail to put my butter in paid 1 dollar. Bought 5 lb of dryed apples 3 lb of peaches and bought ten lb of cheas 1 lb of tea one lb of salratus 15 lb of white sugar beside wot I head for my part. I think that will last me. I bought me cucking utension to cook with so you see I have plenty to eat. But wee are deprived of vedgtable. That 2 lb of pertaters is all the pertates that I have eat for ten month past. I can git them here but I will not pay the price for them tha ask. Tin shilling a lb for pertators butter 3 dollars cheas 1 dollar salratus 3 dollars lb. I bought 40 lb of flour for 12 dollars and I thought when the raney season come on I should not have enough. I sent down and got 50 lb sack. Paid 15 dollars thare and paid 25 dollars for brin[g]ing up on mueals so I think I have got enough for this winter.

Wee have a larg tent paid fitey dollars for it and we made a chantey in front of the tent and a chimney to cook in. John Halladay and I have lived in it this winter. J. Halladay did not go to the river becase he was unwell but he is gitting smart now. We live as well as we can cook and we have got pretty well drill to it. We back [bake] our bread and biscut and frey nut cakes. . . . So wee live just as well as I want to live all except what I told you that is vedgatable. Wee have head deer meet a most all winter so far but the boys hant bin up now for 12 day. Tha kill them the other side of the river and brin[g] up some every time that tha com up that is once a week after provition. Halladay like to live well as I do but I expect to that we shall fare hard next summer as wee cant carrey the good thing whare we go. I begun this letter 2 day ago. Sins then there has bin 2 men dug in within 8 rods of our tent and tha tuck out rising of 3 hundred dollars per day. One man tuck one pan full and he got one hundred and thirty two dollars out of it. But I must tell you that is not often don. There is man 3 rods below them and tha dont git from 4-8 dollars per day. Tha hant struck the rich lead.

When I was down to the cittey and this you may mention to Russell I bought a grindstone and tuck it up to the dry diggins and hung it. I tex them 50 cents an ax and 2 shilling for a mining nife 1 shilling for pork kniff. The stone has neated mee not far from one hundred dollars and tha



EN ROUTE BETWEEN SACRAMENTO AND THE MINES

From *California Illustrated*, 1853

are grinding on it now. I want to tell you a little about the contray. San Francisco last April was verry small place about 12 or 15 houses. When I got thare it head spread over a larg place and thare was a number of hotell thare. Tha head a fire this winter and burnt up the best part of the cittey but in fifteen dayes it was all bault up again and grows the fastes of aney cittey in the world. If it continuers one year it will be bigger than Albany.

Now I will give you som discription of Sacramento Cittey. Last spring it was a wilderness. Now it contains 3 thousand inhab[it]ant beside all the other people that is thare and cittey is full all the time just like a general tra[i]ning. But wuao [woe] to the cittey. Now it lies 160 miles up the Sacramento River. The bank of that river when I was thare was 30 feet from the water. Now it is all under water and tha cant git about the cittey only in boats and tha ask 4 dollars to carry a man from one store to another. But I must tell that thare was a grat many emagrant tented thare and went out about 2 miles south of Sutter Fort on a rising ground. The rising ground is covered with tents and muels and cattle to keep out of the water.

Now I cant tell you aney more about the Cittey but I will give you som discription of this land here and the wild beast. 2 miles from Sacramento Cittey wee cross the south Amaracan fork witch run[s] into the Sacramento just above the cittey. Then wee com on N. East corse over plains with Catran[?] oaks. Short boddeys but verrey long tops the shaid will

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shade half of a acer of ground.²⁵ It is 45 miles to here. Thare is no grass here the land is all bare no green thing but the soap plant. It dont com out of the rock but thare is a plant here that answers for soap. I have used it and it will take of[f] the gress [grease] of your hand as well as soap. It grows in the ground. Tha are all up green now. Tha are about as big as my fist big to the botom and growes like a sculion.²⁶

Now I will tell you about the wild beast here. Thare is the ciotey. It is a Spanish name for wolfs but tha are harmless. All tha want is something to eat and tha will git it if tha can by steling it. Tha will steal the boots out from under your head when you are asleep. Thare is no robin here som squiril but [not] our kind. There is plenty of deer but there is one anamel hear that is verry much dreded that is the grisely bare. It is a bad anamal it is larg. There was one killed about 2 miles from here about 2 weeks sins and he waied 9 hundred pound and tha say that tha have bin killed that has wait 18 hundred pounds. If tha git in contact with a man tha paw him all to peaces and eat him up.

I will tell you what wee hav hed for brackfast this morning. I had sum cold back [baked] beans and a peace of boiled mackrel and good coffey and pie and chese and nut cakes and som cold biled beef. So you may [k]now how I live. Now I will tell you what wee intend to do in the spring. Wee thing of mooving up to the River Youber [Yuba] that is about 3 hundred miles. We have got [to] pack all our provition on muel. I exspect that it will be a hard jurney but wee are determaid to git som gold before wee come home. I have dug about 150 dollars worth of gold sins I have bin here that is all. Haladay and my self is going out a prospect-ten today on the mountin 2 miles of[f] whare tha think thare is gold. For at the foot of hill the miners dig gold more than aney other placer. I told you that I was baking pies yesterday and one of our store keepirs here Mr. Brown wonted one of them and I carried one to him and he gave me \$2.50 for that. You would think that if you could sell yours at that rate you could make money fast. Your loaves of bread is worth here 2 dollars a loff. But I will menthion to you that wee have the best of flour better then the N. York flour. It comes from Chili most boutiful flour you never see so good.

²⁵ John S. Newberry, *Reports on the Geology, Botany and Zoology of Northern California and Oregon* (Washington: 1857), Zoology, p. 56, identifies this tree as *Quercus longilandis*. "The trunk, rarely less than two, frequently seven or eight feet in diameter, rises eight, ten or twelve feet from the ground, and then divides into huge arms, which throw themselves out at right angles, and bending low to the ground, cover a surface of one hundred or more feet in diameter. . . . Here the spermophiles [ground squirrels] live in thousands; under each tree a sub-colony which have, parent and child, pierced the earth with their burrows. . . . These squirrels are long-tailed and long-eared for spermophiles and have much the form and action of the true squirrels. They are very timid, starting at every noise, and on every intrusion into their privacy dropping from the trees, or hurrying in from their wanderings, and scudding to their holes with all possible celerity."

²⁶ California lilywort (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*).

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Three months later Annis wrote again to Nancy from the "Dry Diggins" at Auburn:

I have bin laim ever since I rote to you with the nee complant but gitting better but slow. I cant right but little [to] you at this time but I want to lett you no that I shant leave here this summer so you send your letters to Sacramento Cittey post office. Tha have got a post office there. Now Nancy I tell you that I cant dig gold if I never git any for it is hardist work that ever was don but tha are diggin all around me. Hank dug out one lump within one rod of my door that was worth 54 dollars and he and John Haladay tuck out the day before \$100 and 30 dollars but tha have sold out the lead and gone up to the Uber [Yuba] River to find a better place to work this summer.

Now Nancy I will tell you that I can git gold here and not dig for it. I have moved about 20 rods from whare I wintered and I think you would like to no what I am doing and I will tell you I have taken a larg hous and I am keeping a bording house. 1 meal for \$1.50 a meal. I have bin selling at 50 cents a drink at the bar but sell now for 25. Thing[s] has come down since the te[a]ming got good. I work at my trade. My kit is cloose to my door. I have one hired man witch I pay 5 dollars per day but he is only stay with me till May. I think that I can git a woman. I no of one she will cook for me for 100 and 25 dollars per month. If I could git women as cheap as you can you see what I could save. I take money all the time. I handle more in one day then I did at Port Gibson a month. Nancy money is verry plenty here. Ever boddey got a bag of gold and tha dispute no price.

You may tell Mr. Lane that I have 32 dollars for sho[e]ing a hors. I often take 8 or 10 dollars before 10 oclock in the morning. Gold is the curancy here but there is ten times the silver here as there is home. I keep on my laigs all the time in store and I have got 15 hundred dollars worth of good[s]. I am going to make something or I will brack down. I tell you my grindstone has brought me about 200 dollars and tha are grinding every day and [I] take some money for pulling teeth. I have 5 dollars per tooth. I trade in everything that comes along picks and bars. I make sometimes 4 or 5 dollars in 1 pick in one hour after I have bought it. Tha that wants to leave he will sell his pick and shovel and bar for jus what he can git for them and there is no boddy else that byes but me. Tha come right to me. I have bought for 2 dollars and sold them agin right of[f] from 10 to 15 dollars. Nancy I will tell you that if I was young I never would leave Calafornia till I head 50 thousand but my age and health will not permit. Thar is gold here and thar is money in aboundnce.

I must tell you about the seson here. Vegetation in full bloom now and has bin this 10 days. The woods is all out leaves full groon and I suppose yourn is not budded yet. I suppose you wont to [k]now when I am coming home. I cant tell you. I think it is doutfull if I com this fall. If I

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can git 2 or 3 thousand dollars clear I shall come home for I dont wont to winter here agin. I should not mind it if I head as good houses as thare is in the States. You nead not worry about me beca[u]se the boys has gone and left me. I got fri[e]nd here as good as tha com. I can git trusted for aney amount if I wonted. This man has put me in his store. Gives me the rent and half the [profit] that I can make out of the good[s].

If you head no children I wish you ware here. Wee could make money fast. Due the work ourselves. You could git six dollars per day for washing. I bought a washer day before yesterday and I have now sold it while I am riting for 2 ounces and I gave 4 dollars for it. So you see that I can make money without diggin gold . . . Here is six men digging within 2 rodes of my door that tuck out yesterday 5 hundred and 16 dollars and I presume tha will take as much today. You have no ide[a] what a rush thare is for gold. All this reg[i]on is full of people. It ape[a]rs to me thar is more man here then thar is in the State of N. York. The cuntory is full. I understand that there is thousand and thousand of people coming over the plains this summer but thare is more gold here then I head any ide[a] when I rote to you before. You may dig aney whare and you find som gold but sum places is richer than others but if tha hold on ten years tha will dig up all upper Calafornia.

Nancy I wont to have you right to me if Jerome is in Calafornia and if you [k]now what part he is in. This is a grat contory. The gold diggins exstends 5 hundred miles E. W. N. and South. Nancy sum times I think I will come home for tha die every day. 1 man was buried yesterday, another today. The coffin jus gone by my door and one man cut his throught not 2 hours ago and thare is grate many sick. Thare was one company come here of 9 and 5 out of the nine is dead.

Isaac's inquiry about his younger brother Jerome was answered almost at once and directly from San Francisco:

Dear Brother Isaac

You no doubt have forgotten you little brother Jerome or Bonaparte as I am sometimes caled but I have not forgotten you. In my wifes last letter she wrote that you had started for this country so I thought I would call at the office in this place and inquire for a letter directed to you and so I did and seeing your name I took it out and read it and found that it was from your son in law Mr. Russell. I hope you will pardon me in so doing and attribute the motive and act to my ardent desire to hear from or see you once more in the flesh, especially in this land so far away from our friends.

I left Fort Smith in Arkansas on the 11th of April /49 and came over the plains by the southern route. Was about 7 month getting to Freemonts diggins on the Maraposa at which place I remained but a few days and left for Stockton where I remained doing business untill a few days since. I am in compy with a man by the name of Latimer. We are here and

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have purchest us a large house to put up in Stockton where we expect to remain and do business untill we leave for the States. So far we have done a fair business.

Now Brother I want you to write me. I will give you my address. Rev. J. B. Annis, Stockton, California. I learn from Mr. Russell letter that Henry Corser is somewhere in this country. If you know anything of him mention it in your letter to me and his address and yours.

Perhaps you would like to know something of the southern mines and what the miners are doing. 1st the mines are rich and easy of access. 2nd the miners average from 5 to 16 dollars per day. They are quite healthy which makes it quite an inducement to imigrants. Stockton is above high water mark and not subject to overflow.

Nancy wrote affectionately June 13, 1850, answering her father's letters from Auburn:

We are all well here at home. Business is rather dull here. The plank road has fell through. The canall has been out of repair all summer. There is not much going on. I wish that we were safely landed in California and had the same property there. We might get rich, but I will not complain for we get a good living here by working hard. . . . We have had some bad luck since you went away. Leander had nine hundred and 68 dollars stolen out of the stage. . . . We keep up the old business of baking bread. I have baked 30 loaves today. I am glad to hear that you are doing well. I hope you will get rich. We all want to see you verry much. Take care of your health for you are getting to be old and sickness will go hard with you. I want to see your face once more. I can see your likeness every day but that is not the original. Father I wish I was there to cook and wash for you. Woman as I am I could make a fortune in a little while but I am here and it is no use talking. If you live to come home be carefull and not get robbed on the way. I want you to bring me some curiosities from California, some rare plants and seeds. You can put the roots in a box of dirt and keep it wet. They will live if you can get them across the Isthmus. The children are well. They talk a great deal about you. Alice is the smartest child we have got.²⁷ They all send there love to you.

Her next letter, in September, acknowledged receipt of a draft of \$500 and urged her father to return. Leander Russell added a postscript about one of Isaac's companions who had left California for the States:

There was a gentleman here yesterday that brought the sad news of Jacob Saulpaugh is no more. He died on the steamer Falcon from Chagres to New York, about 3 days sail from Chagres. He lived ownly 4 hours

²⁷ Gravestones in the Port Gibson cemetery record Nancy Russell's dates as 1811-1898, Leander's as 1806-1876, and Alice's as 1838-1904.



SECOND OF EXCHANGE BY ADAMS & CO., SAN FRANCISCO, 1851

Sent by Isaac Annis to his son-in-law, Leander C. Russell

The New-York Historical Society

after he was taken with cholera. When he was first taken sick he enquired for a freemason. This gentleman went to see him. Jake made him promise to deliver his pocketbooks and money to his wife [in] Port Gibson and he kept his promise. He gave her about \$550 dollars in money and there was a draft on N Y for \$500 more payable to me. The draft remains a mystery as I have not had any advices about one. There is nothing in the draft to show who bought it in San Francisco. The draft is jest like the one you sent me except the date and No.²⁸

The grandfather's thoughts turned definitely homeward during the next winter. From Auburn he wrote February 25, 1851:

My health is good at this tim[e] but I have bin sick this winter. I took a bad cold and I was sick about a week but I have got over it. I will tell you that wee have head no winter here, no rain of any account and no snow. The rodes has bin good all winter and prouduse has com down to the last pint. I shall loose one thousand dollars in flour and pork. I went to Sacramento Citty last fall and I paid out three thousand dollars in flour and pork and it cost me when I got it up here 20 dollars per hundred. Now I cant sell it at 10 dollars per hundred and you see I shall loose 15 hundred dollars and it is all owing to the winter. I could com home last fall and brought three thousand and now if i git home with half that mony I shall think I shall due well. . . . Tell Alice that I shall bring the gold to make her a ring when I come. As respect that draft that Mr. Russell has got I

²⁸ California express and banking companies of the time issued Firsts, Seconds, and Thirds of Exchange to transfer money East. Bearing an identical serial number and date, and drawn on the same party, each document was forwarded to the payee by a different route. When the first to be presented was paid, the others became worthless.

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supposed that it was the draft of that money that I sent but if it is not the date nor the number it will draw the money when the draft is presented.

In a final letter of June 30th, containing the draft for \$1200 on Adams & Co.³⁹ illustrated opposite, Isaac Annis announced his imminent departure from San Francisco:

Nancy I am now on my way hom to the States. I will tell you that my health is not verry good and I hav got a hard jerney before me at this tim[e] of the year as it is the rainy season. But I hope I shall indur it as I have gone through a good many hard trial. Thare is three boats for Panama—the Panama and the Ithmus and the Union.⁴⁰ I dont [k]now witch I shall take but I shant right but a few lines to you now.

I now inclose a draft of twelve hundred dollars. If I never git hom this may reach you so you will dispose of it as you see fit. Give some of it to the children more pertickerly to Alice but I hope provideins may smile on me so that I may return.

If Annis chose the steamer *Union* for his return, he met with unexpected adventure when she ran aground on the coast of Lower California. There had been so hearty and prolonged a celebration of the 4th of July aboard that the following night no deck watch was kept and the helmsman fell asleep at the wheel. The vessel became a total loss but all the passengers and much of the cargo were safely landed.⁴¹ Whichever ship Annis took, the uncashed Second of Exchange on Adams & Co. is indicative that he survived the perils of the homeward journey to present a duplicate First on his arrival at New York. More positive evidence still of the traveller's return is a marble gravestone yet standing in the tree-shaded cemetery at Port Gibson:

ISAAC ANNIS,

Died

Jan. 27, 1858

In the 72 Year


of his age.

³⁹ Adams & Co. charged a premium of 2% for drafts on New York. The leading California express company of the gold rush period, it failed in the panic of 1855. Oscar O. Winther, *Express and Stage Coach Days in California* (Stanford University: 1935), pp. 50, 112.

⁴⁰ The *Panama* and the *Isthmus* were Pacific Mail steamers; the *Union* belonged to the independent Empire City Line.

⁴¹ Lewis, *supra*, note 10, p. 247; San Francisco *Morning Post*, July 21, 1851.

STEAMERS.

 **FOR PANAMA.—EMPIRE CITY**
LINE.—Steamship **UNION**, James Marks,
 Commander, will be despatched for PANAMA, on
 TUESDAY, July 1st, at 4 o'clock, P. M.

This splendid steamer, now ready to make her second
 trip to Panama, was built in Philadelphia, expressly for
 the Pacific Ocean and a Tropical Climate.

Her cabins are so spacious and thoroughly ventilated,
 that good health and comfort will be secured.


Her table will be provided with Provisions of the best
 quality, and no "short allowance."

She will connect at Chagres with the steamers of
 the 25th of July.

For freight or passage, apply to **HAYEN & CO.**,
 Montgomery street, near California; or to
I. W. RAYMOND,

Foot of Sacramento st. and Central Wharf.

FARE REDUCED!

 **PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP**
COMPANY.—The only Through Line
 for New York and New Orleans.—The
 Pacific Mail Steamship Co's steamer

PANAMA, James T. Watkins, com-
 mander, will leave for PANAMA, touching at Monterey,
 San Diego, Mazatlan, San Blas, and Acapulco, on
 TUESDAY, July 1st, at 4 o'clock, P. M.

This line connects on the Atlantic side for New York di-
 rect, and also via Havana and Kingston, Jamaica, with the
 U. S. Mail steamers Georgia, Ohio, Empire City, Crescent
 City, Cherokee and Philadelphia; and direct for New Or-
 leans with the U. S. Mail steamers El Dorado and Falcon.

Treasure for shipment received at the company's office,
 corner of Sacramento and Leidesdorff streets, on Satur-
 day, June 28th, and Monday, June 30th.

The bills of lading will be ready for delivery at 9 o'clock,
 A. M., of the day of sailing.


Shippers are particularly notified that no Treasure will
 be received for the above ship, later than 9 o'clock of the
 evening previous to her departure.

Passengers to be on board at noon on the day of
 sailing.

For freight or passage, apply to
E. KNIGHT, Agent.

Office in Sacramento at near cor. Leidesdorff.

FARE REDUCED!

 **FOR PANAMA.**—The Pacific
 Mail Steamship Company's Steamer
ISTHMUS, Ottinger, commander, will
 leave for PANAMA, touching only at

Acapulco, on TUESDAY, July 1st, at 4 o'clock, P. M.

Cabin passage.....\$100.

Steerage do.....00.

The "ISTHMUS" will connect on the Atlantic side
 with the same steamers as the "PANAMA."

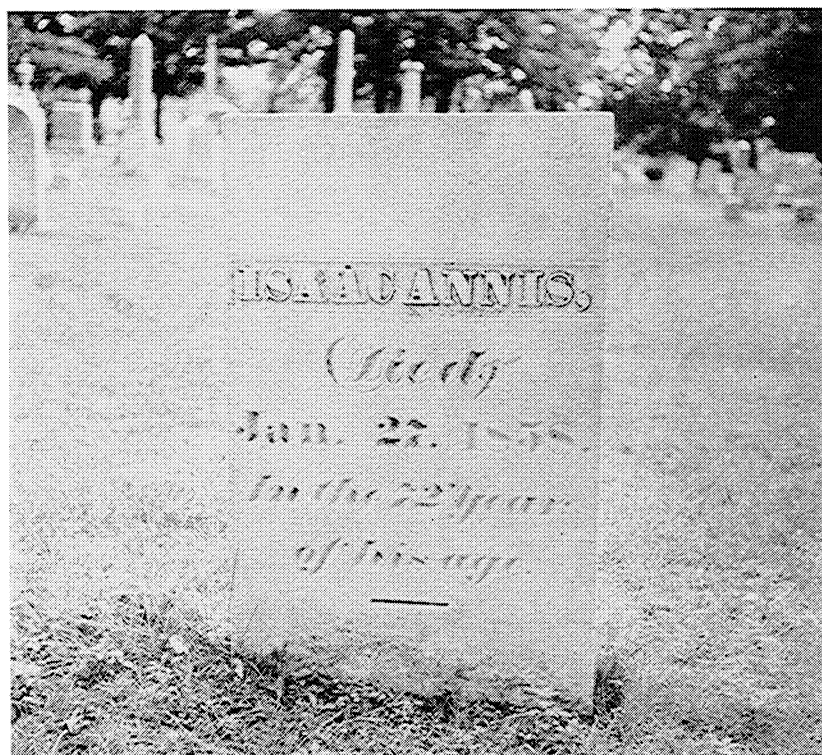
For passage, apply to **E. KNIGHT**, Agent.

Office in Sacramento at near cor. Leidesdorff.

ADVERTISEMENTS OF STEAMSHIPS

"UNION," "PANAMA,"
 AND "ISTHMUS"

California Courier, June 28, 1851



GRAVESTONE OF ISAAC ANNIS, PORT GIBSON, NEW YORK

Photograph by Miss Carolyn Scoon, 1956